PHARMACARE NEWSLETTER

Fair PharmaCare Update

As of December 11, 2003, PharmaCare has registered over 1.3 million families for the Fair PharmaCare plan and 85.8% have submitted their consent forms. Over 662,000 calls have been handled regarding the Fair PharmaCare plan and 15.3 million Fair PharmaCare prescriptions have been processed.

Fair PharmaCare Deductibles for 2004

On January 1, 2004, PharmaNet will be updated to reflect deductibles and family maximums for 2004 for all individuals and families registered under the Fair PharmaCare plan. Deductible accumulations for all registrants will be set to zero. Fair PharmaCare assistance levels for 2004 are based on family net income for 2002.

How can registrants access their 2004 deductible information?

Early in 2004, PharmaCare will mail a *Confirmation of Financial Assistance* for 2004 to individuals or families who:

- received benefits under the Fair PharmaCare plan in 2003 (i.e., exceeded their Fair PharmaCare deductible in 2003); or
- registered late in 2003 and did not, therefore, receive a *Confirmation of Financial Assistance* for 2003.

PharmaCare cannot provide specific deductible information over the phone. However, deductible information is available as follows:

- A registrant can obtain an estimate of their level of assistance by using the Fair PharmaCare Benefit Calculator on the PharmaCare Web site at www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/pharme.
- If a registrant contacts PharmaCare and provides their family net income information for the 2002 tax year, we can provide an estimate of their deductible over the phone. (Contact PharmaCare at 1-800-387-4977, Monday to Friday, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., or Saturday and Sunday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.)
- A registrant can request that a *Confirmation of Financial Assistance* be mailed to them by visiting the PharmaCare Web site at www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/pharme or by contacting the Registration Desk at 1-800-387-4977.

What about registrants who have not submitted a consent form?

Without a registrant's (and, where applicable, their spouse's) signed consent form, PharmaCare cannot verify the family net income with the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. The 2004 deductible for individuals or families who did not submit consent forms will default to the highest amount. This includes individuals and families who, because they were receiving premium assistance through the Medical Services Plan, were pre-registered for the Fair PharmaCare plan in 2003.

Note When the Fair PharmaCare plan was announced, PharmaCare sent a letter to each pre-registered individual or family advising them to submit a consent form if they wished to retain maximum Fair PharmaCare assistance in 2004. In late summer, we sent reminder letters to all pre-registered individuals and families who had not yet submitted a consent form.

Approximately 10% of the letters originally sent were returned as 'undeliverable.' PharmaCare made every effort to obtain current, accurate addresses for the individuals and families concerned. By the end of November 2003, the majority of returned mail was re-directed to updated addresses.

We continue to pursue current addresses for the remaining pre-registered individuals and families. Should these individuals or families contact PharmaCare at 1-800-387-4977 and provide an updated address, PharmaCare will provide temporary financial assistance to allow time for them to return their consent form(s).

Can consent forms still be submitted?

Yes. We encourage all registered individuals and families to submit a consent form as soon as possible. When we receive the signed consent form(s), we will provide temporary financial assistance until such time as we are able to verify the family net income with the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. When the net income has been verified, Fair PharmaCare financial assistance based on the actual family net income will come into effect.

If we receive the consent form in 2004 and can verify the family net income:

- all eligible prescription costs incurred in 2004 will count towards the individual's or family's deductible, and
- if an individual or family reaches their deductible before their income is verified, all eligible costs that they have paid in excess of the deductible will qualify for retroactive reimbursement.

However, because PharmaCare cannot issue retroactive reimbursements until after the end of the calendar year, we recommend that registrants submit their consent form as soon as possible.

How can a registrant get a consent form?

Registered individuals or families can request a reprint of their consent form by:

- visiting the PharmaCare Web site at www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/pharme/; or
- calling the Registration Desk at 1-800-387-4977 Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., or Saturday and Sunday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Retroactive Reimbursements for 2003

When the Fair PharmaCare plan was announced, the Minister of Health Services indicated that late registration (after May 1, 2003) would not negatively affect Fair PharmaCare financial assistance to B.C. residents.

Individuals or families who exceeded the Fair PharmaCare deductible between May 1, 2003, and the date their registration for 2003 was processed will be reimbursed for any eligible prescription costs paid during that time.

In late January 2004, PharmaCare will send a letter to each individual or family who qualifies for reimbursement. The letter will advise them of the amount of the reimbursement and that the cheque has been issued.